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MEMOIRS

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DECEASED ALUMNI

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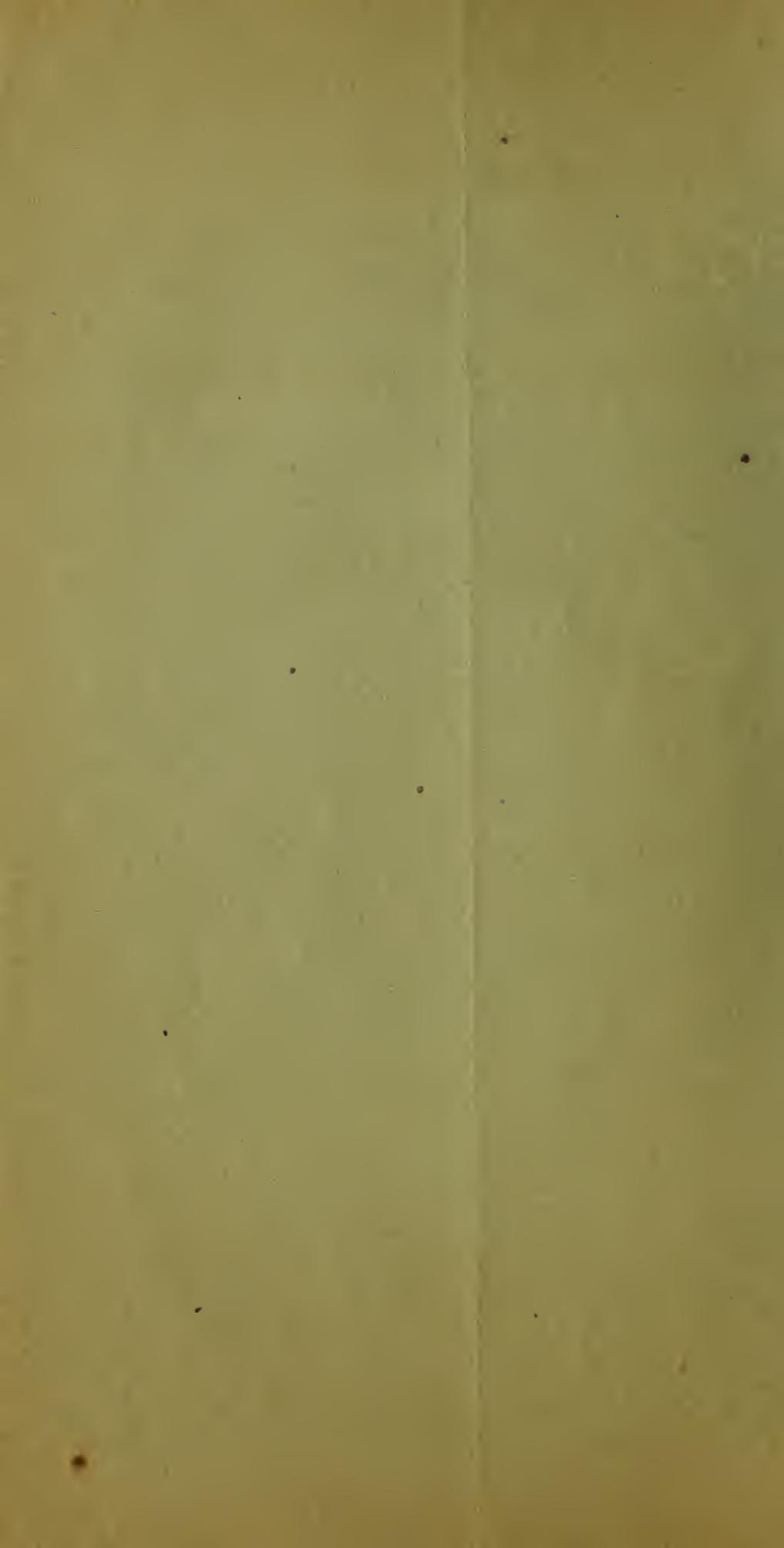
St. John's College.

READ, BY APPOINTMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION, AUGUST 6TH, 1856,

BY

JOHN G. PROUD, J.R., A. M.

ANNAPO利S:
ROBERT F. BONSALL, PRINTER,
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NECROLOGY.

TOBIAS WATKINS, M. D.

THOMAS BEALE DORSEY,
SAMUEL RIDOUT, M. D.

MEMOIRS OF DECEASED ALUMNI.

OUR earlier Alumni are fast passing away. Year by year they depart, and soon the place that once knew them shall know them no more forever. Nor are our younger brethren exempt from the universal law. Their ranks also, from time to time, are being relatively thinned by the same impartial summons. The record of the past year furnishes an illustration of this equal lot. Of the former class, death hath stricken from our catalogue two names, in those of DR. TOBIAS WATKINS and JUDGE THOMAS BEALE DORSEY; and of the latter, one, in that of DR. SAMUEL RIDOUT. I ask your attention to brief notices of each of them in turn:

DR. TOBIAS WATKINS.*

DR. TOBIAS WATKINS died at his residence in the city of Washington, on the 14th day of November, 1855. His life was an eventful one, and presents many points of peculiar interest. DR. WATKINS came of an old and respectable Maryland family, whose branches extend throughout the State. He was born in Anne Arundel county, December 12th, 1780; the only child of Thomas Watkins, and was yet a boy when his father died.

Entered at an early age at St. John's college, he completed his education within its walls, and graduated with the class of

* The present memoir is an expansion of a briefer one, prepared by the writer, and published during the past winter in the National Intelligencer and other papers.

1798. His professional studies were pursued under the direction of Dr. Daniel, of Maryland, and he took his diploma from the Medical College at Philadelphia in the spring of 1802. In the month of May of the same year he married the eldest daughter of George Simpson, Esq., of Philadelphia, cashier of the Bank of the United States; and shortly after commenced practice at Havre de Grace, Maryland. In a few years, however, he removed to Baltimore, and received the appointment of physician to the Marine Hospital. He was in active service during the war with England, having been, in May 1813, appointed surgeon in the 38th regiment of infantry, commanded by Col. Peter Little. His connexion with the army continued after its reduction in 1815, and, in April 1818, he was promoted to the post of Assistant Surgeon General, which he held until June 1821, when, on a further reduction of the army, he was disbanded.

He was not present at the attack on Baltimore, having been sometime before ordered to Norfolk, to devise measures for arresting a malignant disease, which was raging with terrible violence among the troops at that post. In a short time after taking charge of the hospitals there, he had the satisfaction to find, that the means which he adopted were effectual, materially to lessen, if they did not wholly arrest, the mortality.

While there he became a special favorite with the Officer in Command, General Moses Porter, whom a distinguished naval commander of the enemy characterized as "every inch a soldier," and who admitted him to the most confidential relations. The extent of this confidence was evinced in a mission of peculiar delicacy which was entrusted to him. A party of militia, through ignorance or mistake, fired upon what proved to be a flag of truce, and the circumstance was reported to the commander as a gallant repulse of the enemy. Suspecting, but not certain as to its real character, and annoyed, as every soldier must be at such an occurrence, he immediately determined to send a flag to the enemy to ascertain whether his suspicions were correct, and if so, to make a suitable apology for the blunder. DR. WATKINS was selected for this difficult office, with full discretion to act, and embarked in a tender of the Frigate Constellation, then lying

in the harbor, for that purpose. His reception left him in little doubt as to the true state of the case, being in his turn fired upon as soon as he came within range of the enemy's guns. He immediately let go his anchor, and lay to all night under the guns of the huge 74. By the bold confidence thus evinced, and by his adroit management in the morning, he at length succeeded in getting on board of the British commander's ship,—where, after a satisfactory explanation of the affair, he was treated with special courtesy and hospitality.

In 1821, upon his separation from the army, he was appointed by President Munroe, Secretary to the Board of Commissioners under the Florida Treaty, and removed to the city of Washington to enter upon its duties, for the performance of which he was eminently qualified. That he faithfully and satisfactorily discharged them was evinced by his receiving, upon their termination, in the year 1824, from the same chief magistrate, a still more signal mark of his confidence in his appointment to the important post of Fourth Auditor of the Treasury—an office which he held, in the enjoyment of the most confidential relations with the President, during the entire administration of Mr. Adams, and from which he was removed, with the change of administration, in March 1829.

Of the circumstances attending that event, it is not within the design of the present notice to speak. It was the happy fortune of DR. WATKINS to outlive the political animosities of that day, and the aspersions to which they had given birth. *His life*, previous and subsequent to that period, has fully vindicated that high and instinctive sense of honor which was one of the leading traits of his character.

He subsequently opened a school in Georgetown, which he taught for a short time, and then commenced the apothecary business in Washington, which he continued, in connection with the practice of his profession, till 1842. About the year 1845, when the Public School system was established in that city, he was elected the Principal of one of the District Schools, which situation he held till 1850, when he received a place in the Census office,—which he retained till the force in that office was reduced, soon after the beginning of the present administration. Since then, up to the period of his last illness,

he was constantly employed in literary labor upon various works of taste or public utility.

Of his literary labors we come now to speak. These were commenced at an early age, and continued through life, either as a stated occupation or as a relaxation from other and more arduous duties. Few men of his day encountered more severe or prolonged mental toil; few held a more prolific pen, or one employed upon a greater variety of subjects. As early as 1809 he edited a professional journal, called "*The Baltimore Medical & Physical Recorder*," to which he contributed largely. In the year 1816, in conjunction with his brother-in-law, the late Stephen Simpson, of Philadelphia, he commenced the publication at Baltimore of a monthly journal, in octavo form, under the title of "*The Portico, a Repository of Science & Literature*,"—which was conducted with such ability as to procure for it a reputation equal to that of any similar periodical of the day.

About the same time he assisted in forming a literary society called "*The Delphian Club*," of which he became the President; the late Dr. John Didier Readel, whose life he has sketched in an elegant memoir, being the Secretary. "Its number was limited to nine, to correspond with that of the Muses, and the character of its members was no less various,—embracing law, physic and divinity; music, poetry and painting; history, philosophy, and criticism." Most of its original members have since acquired fame in some department of literature or science.* At its weekly meetings stated essays or other voluntary contributions in prose or poetry were read, many of which were afterwards published in "*The Portico*;" and the flow of wit and genial humor, it is said, would have done no discredit to the coteries of Curran or Garrick. It was

* Among those members, were, GEN'L W.M. H. WINDER, DR. McCULLOH, PAUL ALLEN, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, W.M. GWYNN, the well known editor of the *Baltimore Gazette*,—a man of great benevolence and infinite humour,—at whose house in Bank Lane, known as "*The Tripod*," the club were wont to meet—the REV'D JOHN PIERPOINT, author of *Airs of Palestine*, and other poems—and JOHN NEALE, the Editor, Orator, Poet, and Novelist, the man of versatile genius and voluminous authorship.

Of these, only the last two survive, one resident in Maine and the other in Massachusetts.

in congenial association like this, that our friend fostered and cultivated that taste for literature which distinguished him through life, and imparted such peculiar grace and charm to his conversation.

In the year 1821, he delivered at the Baltimore College a course of lectures on modern literature, illustrating in the comprehensive range of its subjects, including belles-lettres, rhetoric and eloquence, the varied extent of his reading. His melodious elocution and grace of manner made his delivery uncommonly attractive, and he was noted as one of the most elegant and accomplished readers of his day. Of the addresses which upon various occasions he was called upon to make, I have a printed copy of *an Anniversary discourse before the Columbian Institute of Washington, in January 1826*; which is characterized by his accustomed elegance of style and fertility of illustration. This society, of which he was one of the founders, was upon the plan, and may be considered as the parent, of the present National Institute, of which he was also a member.

While connected with the public schools at Washington, he read a series of lectures on Education, which were well attended, and highly appreciated. At a later period, while Superintendent of a Sunday School, he delivered a similar course, before teachers, on Sunday School instruction. Both of these contained valuable practical suggestions for giving greater efficiency to the important work of the teacher, in developing and improving the mental and moral faculties of the young; a subject in which he always manifested a deep and intelligent interest. In the latter capacity he also read a series of essays, in the form of a *Commentary upon the Lord's Prayer*, which evinced, not only an intimate acquaintance with the sacred writings, but an extent and variety of theological reading not common in a layman.

At one time, and for several years, he edited a political paper in Washington with signal ability. Decided in his own opinions, he was yet tolerant to those of others, and his editorial course was marked by uniform courtesy and moderation.

In short, his pen was never idle, being constantly employed in contributions to the public press, or the literary periodicals

of the day, in articles as varied as his acquirements, especially in the department of criticism, for which his refined and discriminating taste and comprehensive powers of generalization and analysis peculiarly fitted him. All these, with his characteristic modesty, he published anonymously. Had they been printed under his own name, they would have made it conspicuously and favorably known among the writers of the day. Besides all these he left behind him, in manuscript, valuable papers on various subjects which never appeared in print. A collection from his writings would form an attractive volume, and is due to his literary reputation. It is to be hoped that some competent hand may undertake the task.

At the time of his death he was engaged in preparing for the press a history of the British invasion of the District and capture of the city of Washington, with a narrative of the events which preceded and followed that disastrous occurrence, in connexion with an officer of the army of that period, and from notes taken and collected by him. This work will be an interesting and valuable addition to our national history, and will throw new light upon the causes of the failure of the American arms upon that memorable occasion, and show where the responsibility of the disaster should properly rest.

But it was not the capacity which our departed friend evinced in the discharge of the various public trusts which he held, nor yet his ability and elegance as a writer, that his friends delight to dwell upon, so much as those admirable personal qualities which excited at once their confidence and admiration, and made him the charm and ornament of the social circle. In his domestic relations these secured for him the most constant and devoted affection; and also inspired in the hearts of many friends an ardent personal esteem, which no vicissitudes of fortune could ever shake, and which will keep his memory "green in their souls" with many tender recollections.

There is yet another element to be mentioned, without which no character can be considered complete, and which formed the crowning beauty of his. The various trials that he was called to endure were sanctified to him in the formation of a deep, earnest and consistent piety. With him the vital

truths of Christianity were a practical reality, receiving the homage of his vigorous intellect, embraced in his inmost heart, and illustrated in all the latter days of his life. For many years in the communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church, he yielded to her doctrines and tenets an intelligent and unwavering faith. Nor was it merely the assent of his understanding. Besides other official duties appertaining to a layman, he was actively engaged, successively, in two congregations of the church, in the useful and honorable position of Superintendent of the Sunday Schools;—the duties of which he was not satisfied to make a mere customary routine.

In the faithful observance of the ordinances of the church, and the conscientious discharge of every religious duty, he found a compensative solace amidst the trials and vicissitudes of his mortal life, and that peace and serenity in its close which only they can bestow. And thus at last, at the ripe age of seventy-five years, was our lamented friend “gathered to his fathers,” as we firmly trust and believe, “having the testimony of a good conscience,” and “the comfort of a reasonable, religious and holy hope, in favor with God, and in perfect charity with the world.”

JUDGE THOMAS BEALE DORSEY.

We come now to speak of JUDGE THOMAS BEALE DORSEY, who graduated in the succeeding class of 1799.

There are no names better known in Maryland than two of those which compose his own, BEALE and DORSEY, both of which were prominently and favorably identified with the early history of the State.

His father, John Worthington Dorsey, of Elkridge, Anne Arundel county, was a volunteer in the Revolutionary Army, in which he rose to the rank of captain. He belonged to that veteran corps, the famous “*Old Maryland Line*,” the term of whose enlistment was generally “for the war;” and he served for nearly the entire period, participating in the battles of Long Island, White Plains, Brandywine and Monmouth, and it is believed in others also. To have taken an active part in that memorable struggle is the highest, and the only patent of nobility, which the American gentleman may claim.

It was during the war, viz., in June 1778, that he married Comfort, daughter of Samuel Worthington, of Baltimore county; and of these parents, the subject of our sketch was born, the second child, October 17th, 1780, on Elkridge. The rudiments of his education were received at Newark, Delaware, whence, at an early age, he entered St. John's College, and graduated, as we have said, with the class of 1799, of which he was almost the last survivor.

The tradition is that his standing at college did not excite any high expectations of a distinguished career. Not deemed by his associates to possess much talent, he was yet noted for his steady, plodding, persevering industry. His life, therefore, adds another to the many examples, which prove that, while precocious minds do not always fulfil the promise of their youth, the intellect slowest in development is often the strongest and most vigorous in action. It is an illustration, also, of the reward which scarce ever fails to attend systematic perseverance and patient toil. After leaving college, he entered the office of Judge Walter Dorsey, in Baltimore, as a student of law, and was admitted to the bar in 1803. He at once commenced practice in Baltimore, where he remained till 1811, when the state of his health compelled him to suspend active professional duties and to retire to his farm upon Elkridge. The same habits of industry and systematic labor which distinguished him as a student, were carried by him into his early professional life. The degree of success to which he had attained, and the high estimation in which he was held, during this period, are evinced by the fact, that in 1807 he was elected, with Robert Steuart, to represent the city of Baltimore in the House of Delegates;—and that in 1809 he was chosen a member of the State Senate, where he served for two years. His professional standing was still further shown by his being appointed in 1809, the District Attorney of the United States for the State of Maryland.

He resumed practice after his removal to Anne Arundel county, and attended the courts of that circuit. He was also again sent to the Legislature, representing his native county in the House of Delegates during the sessions of 1813 and 1814. In the Legislature such a man was, of course, an useful

member,—bestowing faithful attention to the details of business in the committees and the house, and also distinguished by his readiness and ability in debate. He took a prominent part in the discussion of the more important measures of the time; and in the session of 1813 he gained special credit by his course in the investigation of the celebrated *Alleghany Contested Election Case*; in which he was the principal champion of the Democratic, as John Hanson Thomas was, of the Federal, party. In the bitterness of their disappointment at the result, some leaders of the Democratic party proposed extreme measures of a disorganizing character; but the more conservative counsels of Judge Dorsey eventually prevailed, and controlled their action to a wiser moderation.

He was always decided in his political opinions, and frank in the avowal of them, and often took an active part in the canvass; serving as one of the Electoral Candidates for De Witt Clinton in the Presidential contest of 1812. He subsequently took the hustings in the same capacity for John Quincy Adams, in his first contest for that office, but resigned it to accept a seat upon the bench.

Whatever ambition he may have had for political honors, his devotion to the law was paramount; and his professional career was active and laborious, and continued almost to the close of his life. In February 1822, he was appointed Attorney General of Maryland; and one of his first official acts was to take a prominent part in the trial of the Bank cases, noted for the interest which they excited, and the importance of the principles involved. On the 27th July 1824, he was elevated to the bench, receiving the appointment of Chief Judge of the Third Judicial District, which position gave him also a seat upon the Bench of the Court of Appeals. Upon the death of Judge Archer, Judge Dorsey was commissioned to succeed him as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, on the 3rd July 1848, and held this highest point of professional eminence until the reorganization of the judicial system of the State by the adoption of the new constitution in 1851.

Of the convention which met to remodel that instrument, Judge Dorsey was a prominent member, and was distinguished therein, not only by his wise, conservative views, but by the

ability with which he maintained them; participating in the discussion of most of the leading topics, especially upon the elective franchise, the test oath, and the tenure of the judicial office.

From the period of his leaving the bench to the time of his death, he devoted himself to the congenial pursuits of agriculture. His health, which in his early life was delicate,—and, notwithstanding his appearance and the activity and regularity of his habits, was never very robust,—became impaired, and sinking by gradual decay, brought him to the close of a long and useful life of seventy-five years, on the 26th December 1855.

JUDGE DORSEY married, January 28th, 1808, Milcah Goodwin, daughter of William Goodwin, a prominent merchant of Baltimore, by whom he had a family of nine children, six of whom survive him,—and of these, two are well known lawyers of our State, and esteemed members of our fraternity.

To speak adequately of JUDGE DORSEY's personal and professional life, would require a chronicler more familiar with both, and more competent than I can pretend to be.

His brethren at the bar can bear testimony to the fidelity and research which characterized the performance of his duties as a lawyer; the systematic preparation, the zeal and earnestness, which he brought to the trial of his cases:—and the records of our highest courts, through a long series of years, illustrate the learning and ability, the logical acumen, and soundness of judgment, which signalized his judicial career.

In the circuit courts, his prompt decisions, and his capacity and vigour in the despatch of business, will long be remembered. Cases were not allowed to slumber and grow musty, nor could suitors often complain of "the law's delay," where he sat as judge. The case of *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*, would have had but little chance to survive all the parties to it, and to see two generations of lawyers, had it been upon the docket of one of his courts. Decision and promptitude were leading traits of his character, and they are those which are most potential in commanding success. His life may be considered an eminently successful one. He attained a high position among his fellow men,—he won and maintained their respect and confidence,—he enjoyed the esteem and affection of his

family and a large circle of friends. What more of happiness can fall to the lot of any man?

To a life of irreproachable moral excellence, he added a sincere and earnest reverence for the great truths of religion:—he was a prominent member, and for many years a vestryman, of the congregation to which he belonged, and took an active interest in its prosperity. As years gathered over him his religious convictions became deeper, and he met the final summons with the firmness of a Christian, and died in the communion of the church.

DR. SAMUEL RIDOUT.

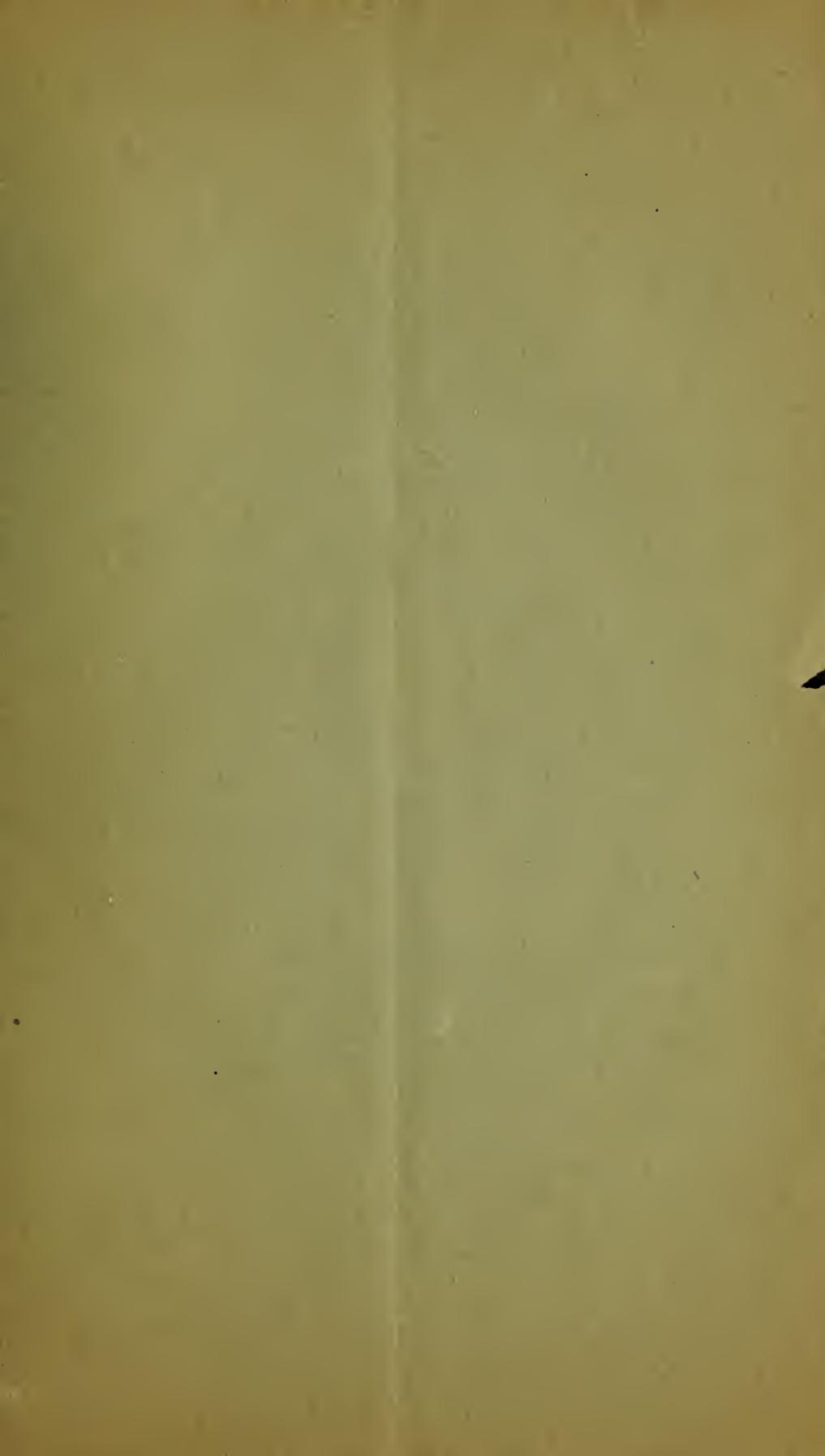
We turn now to a brief notice of one who did not, like the other two, attain to a ripe old age, but was cut off in the flower of his days. His future seemed full of hope and promise, and the domestic and social ties that bound him to the world were of the most endearing character. But disease laid its hand upon him, and he whose office it was to heal the maladies of others, was himself stricken by the destroyer. He received the visitation as a mandate from Heaven, and bowed in submission to the Divine decree.

DR. SAMUEL RIDOUT, the son of Dr. John Ridout, was born in the city of Annapolis, September 15th, 1824. He received his early education at home, whence he entered the Grammar School of St. John's, and having completed the usual college course, was graduated in February 1842. Perhaps from a sort of hereditary bias, he followed the bent which seems to have led so many of his name in the choice of a profession, and became a student of medicine. He prosecuted his studies with ardour and industry, attended three courses of lectures at the Medical School of the University of Maryland, and took his diploma in 1846. He soon after commenced practice in connection with his father, and gave promise of attaining a high rank in his profession. His natural gentleness and amiability of manner made him a welcome visitant by the bed of sickness, while his judgment and skill in the use of remedies begat confidence in his professional advice.

But this career of usefulness was soon interrupted. The seeds of that insidious disease, consumption, manifested them-

selves in a frame not naturally strong, and baffling all human skill, gradually destroyed his life. His bitter trial was lengthened out through several years of painful suffering; but the afflictions of the body produced a chastening and sanctifying influence upon the spirit, and enabled him to commit himself unreservedly to the will of his Heavenly Father. In the realizing sense of his Saviour's presence, his last whispered accents were, "*I am not afraid to die!*" And thus peacefully did he enter into rest, June 11th, 1856.

In his character "the gentler elements" were blended in beautiful harmony;—his life was one of unusual purity,—and for at least six years before his death, his religious convictions led him to an open confession of his faith before men,—in the Presbyterian Communion, to which his family belonged. DR. RIDOUT married, in October 1850, Anne, daughter of Mr. Jacob Winchester, and left a widow and three children.



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